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SUBJECT: GOJ REVERSES COURSE AND RECOGNIZES GREEK PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III

REF: A. AMMAN 2305

1B. AMMAN 2241

1C. ATHENS 1021

1D. JERUSALEM 225

11. (U) A month-long disagreement between the Government of Jordan and the Greek Orthodox Church ended on June 12. Local media reported that the GOJ reversed its May 12 decision to withdraw recognition of Patriarch Theophilos III of the Greek Orthodox Church in Jerusalem (ref b). At a June 12 press conference, Government Spokesman Nasser Judeh explained that "the cabinet has become convinced that Theophilos has honored all the commitments he undertook when he was appointed as patriarch in 2005."

12. (U) The cabinet's decision came after Theophilos wrote two letters to Jordanian Prime Minister Marouf Bakheit, and issued a statement confirming that no church lands were sold under his tenure. The decision was announced just in advance of a June 12 visit to Amman by Greek FM Dora Bakoyannis.

13. (SBU) Dr. Raouf Abu Jaber, Chairman of the Orthodox Society in Amman, told poloff that the Arab Orthodox community was displeased with Theophilos' leadership and news of the GOJ reversal. Abu Jaber said that Arab Orthodox Christians resent the lack of Arab - specifically Jordanian - membership in the Holy Synod and Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher (ref A). He accused the Greek Government of exerting pressure on the GOJ and the Palestinian Authority to recognize Theophilos. Abu Jaber remains convinced that "the monks in Greece" - as he refers to the Holy Synod -- care only about the profits they make from the church's lands in Jerusalem. COMMENT: In fact, Jordan's Arab Orthodox community is split into pro- and anti-Theophilos camps. END COMMENT.

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